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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001451

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [SA](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF INTERIOR ON YEMEN-SAUDI SECURITY COOPERATION

Classified By: Charge Alan G. Misenheimer for Reasons 1.5 (b,d)

1. (C) Begin summary: On June 21, Charge met with Minister of Interior Alimi to discuss recent developments in Yemen-Saudi border security, Red Sea counter-terrorism cooperation, press reports of Yemeni terrorist arrested in Saudi Arabia, and other issues. The Charge was accompanied by RSO and PolOff. End summary.

Yemen-Saudi Arabia Border Security

2. (C) During a 6/21 meeting with Minister of Interior, Dr. Rashad Alimi, Charge asked him to discuss the recent Yemen-Saudi border agreement and its implications for improved border security. Alimi noted that Yemen-Saudi border cooperation is complicated by populations that straddle the border and flow freely from one side to the other. The border security agreement between the two countries established several committees to manage this phenomenon, but controlling the flow of "cars and lambs" around the border towns is very difficult. Smuggling remains a major problem; some groups are able to bypass ROYG checkpoints crossing from Yemen's Hadramut region into Saudi Arabia, and vice versa.

3. (C) Overall, Alimi described Yemen-Saudi border cooperation as strong and improving. The joint committees are responsive to changes in the situation and meet whenever Yemeni or Saudi Arabia desires. Since the recent terrorist attacks in Riyadh, Alimi feels there is a heightened Saudi commitment to security throughout the Kingdom.

4. (C) Noting that the Minister of Defense was unable to attend a scheduled 6/17 meeting in order to deal with a security incident near Marib, Charge asked whether terrorist suspects had been arrested. Alimi explained that the incident was not terror-related, but criminal. A group of criminals in Saudi broke a colleague out of police custody and fled across the border into Yemen. Saudi Armed Forces, not police, followed the fugitives about 240 kilometers into Yemen, killing one during the exchange of gunfire which ensued. The fugitives car later overturned in the desert. The remaining suspects ran off and remain at large. The Minister of Defense went to Marib for talks with his Saudi Defense counterpart after this "hot pursuit."

5. (C) According to Alimi, ROYG considers the incident the sort of territorial infringement that underscores the need for cooperation. The ROYG asked the Saudis to ensure that it does not happen again, "Yemen will take care of the Yemeni side of the border, but we accepted their apology."

6. (C) In response to the Charge's query on recent press reports of Yemeni terrorists arrested in Saudi Arabia, Alimi noted that two people were arrested with false Yemeni passports, but are now believed to be Egyptians. The ROYG is currently seeking the extradition of about 100 Yemenis in Saudi Arabia for criminal prosecution.

Qatari and Djiboutian Cooperation

7. (C) Alimi indicated that there was no direct CT discussions during the recent visits of the Djiboutian President or the Qatari Emir to Yemen. However, Qatar has an active CT agreement with Yemen and works with all its neighbors on Red Sea security -- a top ROYG priority. That security requires an effective Coast Guard reporting to the MOI. Alimi then repeated a familiar refrain - Yemen needs financial assistance to defray the Coast Guard's \$100 million plus price tag. The Saudis have not been forthcoming - during Alimi's last trip to the Kingdom, they told him that the U.S. should assist the Coast Guard because of Yemen's cooperation in the war on terror.

And Now, About Our Cars...

8. (C) Charge thanked Alimi for MOI's commitment to the security of American interests in Yemen, and reiterated the need for continued vigilance. Alimi agreed to look into some

administrative delays that affect Embassy security including non-diplomatic license plates for Embassy vehicles and an 18-car backlog of privately owned vehicles for mission personnel at Hodeidah port.

MISENHEIMER